

Student Assessment Techniques



CLiKAPAD

Leading Audience Response Systems for PowerPoint

Assessing students at university

If you're a professor at a university, you will be well aware that for the first time in a student's educational career, there are no formal, centrally-governed exams to be sat each term. No more GCSEs, no more A-levels, just those assessments set by the university itself. That places the power in your hands. How will you choose to assess your students? Which methods could you use to see if they understand what you've taught them?

One of the most common ways to assess students is using a formal exam, much like the ones they are used to at school. While these can be a useful way to assess students, there are lots of problems with them which are widely recognised. Some say that it is unfair to make students revise for so long to test them on so few aspects of the course. Others say the high-pressure situation leads to poor performance despite knowing the material.

Another way to find out how much your students know is through some form of oral examination, involving giving answers to topics out loud with no writing involved, or creating a presentation. This means the students get to learn presentation skills along with engaging with the material, and you can use a Q&A session to probe them further. Some shy students may struggle with this, though, so bear this in mind when you are marking.

A hi-tech way to conduct an exam uses a multiple choice model and the [rental of an audience response system](#). Here, each student is given a handheld voting device, and the number of this device is recorded for each student so you can correlate everyone's results. A series of multiple choice questions appear on the screen and the students vote for what they believe to be the right answer. This is a quick method of assessment, it runs at the rate the students choose, and it means the results are collected automatically so you don't need to do any marking.

Other methods include more creative projects. For example, creating a video, a poster or a creative writing piece can work for some subjects to indicate what they have learnt, so think about whether this could be an option for a more interesting type of marking.

Ideally steer clear of group work for important assessments. It is usually the case that one person will end up doing more work than the others, and slackers may be able to get away with it as hard-working group members will guarantee them a good mark. Checking how each student is doing individually is a much better, fairer idea.

Collecting student feedback at the end of the year

With new university reports compiled all the time and increasing importance being placed on student satisfaction, it is important that lecturers get their teaching style in order. While you can ask students to fill out feedback forms at the end of the last lecture or to go away and fill in online surveys, this is time-consuming and means you have to take the responses from each person's feedback manually.

One of the best ways to collect data quickly and accurately is with a [student response system](#). Each student is given a handheld voting remote and asked to press the button corresponding to their answer to a question. These responses are then sent to a receiver before being processed and

transformed into an on-screen result immediately. This way, everyone is able to see the overall feeling of the group of students, and the lecturer can tackle any issues straight away.

Student satisfaction is given fairly significant weighting in lots of the university league tables, and for many students it is one of the most important factors. If the students at an educational establishment aren't satisfied, it suggests that it might not be the right university for them, so the way students respond in these official surveys can have a serious impact on application patterns.

Aspects assessed in the student surveys include satisfaction with teaching style, module content, contact hours and resources available, so make sure you include these in your own feedback forms. An easy way to collect these responses can be at the end of the last lecture of the academic year before exams. Most students will probably turn up for last minute revision, so you will get the most feedback this way, and it's quick and easy to carry out so nobody will mind doing it.

Students like to know that people are listening to them, so by asking for their feedback they will feel more appreciated. Also, it means that you are able to improve on any aspects that need work for next year's intake. Not only does this benefit the students as it means they get the learning experience they feel would work for them, but it helps you to refine your teaching technique.

Feedback is very important, as without it problems can go unrecognised which may be highly detrimental to students' learning. By asking a few quick questions, you can find out how you've been doing as a lecturer and what you can do to help students in the future.

Collecting feedback from university students

Now that the academic year is over, the thoughts of university lecturers will probably be turning to the new intake of students in autumn. However, if you want to improve the way you teach and the attainment of your students, it is important that you base your new lecture plans on the feedback of previous students so that you get a programme that will suit everyone and improve your skills as a lecturer. So, how could you go about collecting this feedback?

Many university departments issue online surveys which are emailed to each student in the hope that they will be completed. However, these are very easy to ignore, and there is no incentive for the student to take time out of their own day to fill in the survey. Most students assume that nothing will be done off the back of these surveys as they never see the results or benefit in any way. If this is the technique you want to use, consider adding an incentive, such as entry into a prize draw to win a voucher for everyone who completes the survey.

If you would prefer to conduct your feedback questionnaire before the end of term, think about using an electronic student response system. Each student is given a [handheld remote](#) and asked to vote for the corresponding answer on a screen, before all of the responses are sent to a receiver. These responses are then displayed immediately on a screen, so if you want to follow up on any feedback you can request that people elaborate on their answers. This is also an anonymous system, so the students won't worry that their answers won't be kept confidential.

If you have meetings with your students, you could use this as an opportunity for them to raise any concerns out of the eye of the other students. For instance, if one student is struggling because they are constantly distracted by others around them, encourage them to tell you about things like this

when you meet them face to face. Building rapport with students is the best way to get them to be honest about the way lectures are conducted, and can be extremely useful.

The sooner after the end of term you can get your results, the better. After a while, the students won't want to think about anything university-related, so for the most accurate, up to date and comprehensive responses, ask for feedback as soon as possible so that you can start to act on it and start planning for the new academic year.